

High court: Washington farmworkers entitled to break pay

Originally published July 16, 2015 at 9:57 am Updated July 16, 2015 at 10:00 am

The Washington Supreme Court says farmworkers who are paid by how much they pick are entitled to separate, additional pay for their rest breaks.

By [GENE JOHNSON](#)

The Associated Press

The Seattle Times

SEATTLE — The Washington Supreme Court says farmworkers who are paid by how much they pick are entitled to separate, additional pay for their rest breaks.

The unanimous opinion Thursday came in a case involving Sakuma Brothers Farms, a berry farm in Skagit County. Some of the farm's pickers filed a federal class-action lawsuit in 2013, saying they were entitled to paid rest breaks under state law.

Sakuma settled the workers' past claims, but it denied further liability. The company said it agrees that workers are entitled to paid rest breaks, but it said the amount it pays the pickers is inflated to include compensation for rest breaks.

The justices said that's not good enough. They reasoned that Sakuma's system encourages workers to skip their rest breaks and keep picking, which can be bad for their health.